

Blue Ridge

Seasonal newsletter of the
Blue Ridge Outdoor
Education Center
Fall 2004



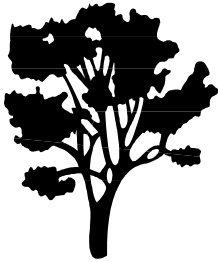
Blaze

Fall 2004 Schools

**This fall, the following schools
have visited Blue Ridge:**

Westminster School
Prince Avenue Christian School
Village Montessori School
Sarah Smith Elementary
Northwoods Montessori School
Atlanta International School
Bartow County Elementary
Schools
Greenfield Hebrew Academy
RD Head Elementary
Davis Academy
Sandy Springs Middle School
Eastanollee Elementary
Fairstreet Elementary

Ele- High
mentary
Union



Fall Foliage of Blue Ridge

By: Jesse Eisenbise

*Way down in the Blue Ridge Mountains;
Way down where the tall pines grow;
Lives my sweetheart of the mountain;
She's my little Georgia rose*

One of my favorite old time bluegrass songs, *Georgia Rose* comes to my mind when I'm among the deciduous hardwood forest that grows right here at Blue Ridge. With the onset of winter comes the color explosion of the changing leaves on some of our deciduous trees. The Red Maple gives a brilliant show of crimson, while the Pignut and Mockernut Hickories turn to a blazing bright yellow. Starting to change the earliest of the deciduous trees, the Sourwood displays a salmon hue, eventually turning to bright red. A soft, dark, yellow is what the Beech gives us, but this tree will hold onto its leaves until spring. The Sweetgum displays wonderful colors of deep purple, red, and yellow leaves.

This amazing color variation among the ridges and mountains is fleeting, and can only be seen for a few short weeks. Tucked way back in among the old pines, these "roses" of October are blooming, putting on the annual autumn spectacular color show. I'll be sure to get out and see them!

Quotable Quotes!

Students said...

"The most important thing I learned about nature is that every single part is important to our environment."

"My favorite class activity at Blue Ridge was aquatic ecology because we were learning and having fun at the same time."

"...I never had a chance like this to experience the mountains."

Teachers said...

"...every activity was connected to our curriculum. The program was very structured and appropriate to their age and ability level. I was very impressed." - teacher, Atlanta International School

"Excellent staff! Everyone knows so many interesting facts, and [they] know how to make it fun for students." - teacher, Bartow County schools

"[The staff] seemed to have extensive knowledge in this field of study and were well equipped to answer any questions about geology or forest [ecology] that

Nature's Winter Preparation

By: Vicki Yeh

As temperatures drop and winter approaches, Mother Nature is preparing for the cold months ahead. Birds begin a feeding frenzy called hyperphagy. This rapidly increases their body fat so they can survive the long migration to Central and South America. More northern species are also migrating to the southern U.S., so now is a great time to get out your binoculars. Bird feeders are especially appreciated in winter when food is scarce, and are also a wonderful way to lure birds to your window for prime viewing.

What do mammals do in the winter? Some adapt to the colder temperatures by growing thicker fur, and finding many different sources of food to sustain them. Some mammals, such as chipmunks, bears, and even bats, will hibernate. This deep sleep is only interrupted by occasional awakenings to feed.

Winter is also a difficult season for plants. The days are shorter, so there is less sunlight. Photosynthesis slows, and most plants are not able to produce their own food. Many survive the winter exposed to the elements – ice, wind, and freezing sap. Others, however, spend the winter as underground storage units – tubers, roots, and bulbs.

Winter may seem like a time when nature is dormant, but life persists even in the harshest of conditions. When the snows melt and the air warms, Mother Nature renews her cycle of life once again.



Director's Niche..... John DiDiego

Each fall I look for them. Every healthy tree branch holds many. They come in various shapes and colors, but they are all tiny.

And they each contain a miracle...

.....*Buds*.....all of the genetic material for next year's growth already lies hidden in miniscule buds, protected from the winter chill by thin scales. All of the flowers, branches and stems are already here in their embryonic form. That Mother Nature plans so carefully for the future comforts me. Every bud I see is a relief. Especially this year. To me it's a promise that all of this life will come about in its season, when the time is just right. Cynics will say, "Yes, but not all of them survive." True enough, Nature is no cheapskate – she always produces an abundance. But to me the fact that *any of them do* survive is the miracle. That the tree drops leaves to conserve water and extends its root base for the spring growth spurt, all while warding off the winter's cold astounds me.

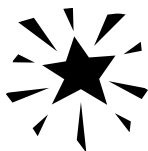
I can't stop thinking about buds. Oh, did I mention...? My wife and I are expecting our first child in January? Our own embryonic miracle. As the Native Americans looked to our animal and plant brothers and sisters for life lessons, I know that our little one will burst forth in due time. That's why I'm comforted by Nature's plan; and, in the fall, I look for buds.

THE NIGHT SKY

By: Dan Milz

Over the past several weeks many groups coming to Blue Ridge Outdoor Education Center have commented on the beauty and clarity of the night sky. The Milky Way, our galaxy, has been putting on a spectacular display, and the occasionally shooting star begs "ooo's" and "ahhhh's." Usually, someone asks, "Why can't I see this many stars at my house?" or, "I've never seen the Milky Way before!" There are two reasonable answers for the difference between the night sky here at Blue Ridge and that of the suburban areas in this country. The first answer is one of seasonal change. The summer months bring a haze notorious to the Blue Ridge Mountains and much of the east coast. Look for this haze to clear in the coming winter months and the likes of Orion and Ursa Major to brighten up.

The second answer is light pollution. Lights from streetlamps to store front signs radiate outward towards space. This outward radiation creates a haze of artificial light which hangs over developed areas blocking and dimming our star fields. Our lights, which we see as a blessing, are making it more and more difficult for us to see the stars which have guided us for many years.



Summer's Leftovers

By: Nathan Hostetter

A chill has entered the air here in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Georgia. Autumn is approaching and all eyes are on the beautiful and miraculous changes that accompany the upcoming season. Birds are migrating, leaves are falling and many animals are preparing for the cold winter ahead. But not all of the familiar critters will disappear for the winter. Although not often visible due to their nocturnal tendencies, local owls are year round tenants of these forests here at Blue Ridge. Their majestic "hoots" and "whinnies" can be heard echoing from these hills during any month of our calendar year. Unlike other migrants flying south in search of food, these birds of prey have no need for migration. With their specialized and efficient adaptations owls are able locate prey throughout the winter months. Owls welcome the upcoming winter with calls that remind our hearts that not everything about autumn revolves around change.



If you are considering a trip to Blue Ridge for the upcoming school year, **NOW** is the time to call to reserve a date. For a free informational CD, call or e-mail:

(706) 886-7621

blueridge@alltel.net
www.campmikell.com

Erin Buchinger, Jesse Eisenbise, Dan Milz, Nathan Hostetter, Stephanie Rynders, Vicki Yeh, John DiDiego



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Center**

Blue Ridge Outdoor Education Center
Rt. 3 Box 3495
Toccoa, GA 30577

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